

**UNITY SPIRITUAL CENTER DENVER  
YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY  
SACRED SAFETY PROCEDURES**

Unity Spiritual Center Denver has a spiritual, moral, and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children and youth who participate in our programs. This policy is established to define appropriate steps to meet that obligation.

**SICK CHILDREN**

We cannot check in a child who is exhibiting (or has exhibited in the past 24 hours) any of the following symptoms. Unusual fatigue or irritability, fever, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat, complaining of sore ears or throat, and rash. Children with these or similar symptoms should be returned to the parent or guardian.

**SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT**

A parent or legal guardian must sign in their child/ren upon entering the classroom and sign him/her out at the end of the class. At no time should anyone other than a parent or legal guardian be allowed to sign a child out unless written permission is obtained from the parent/guardian no matter how well-known that person is to the staff or volunteer.

**RECORD KEEPING**

A parent is to complete an information form for each child. These forms are to include names of children, addresses, phone numbers, parent name(s), and any allergy/medical information including health card numbers that are important for leaders to know. These forms are also to include any specific needs of the children and any helpful information or instructions that will assist the Youth and Family Ministry Director, teachers, and assistants in meeting those needs. These forms are to be kept in electronic file format in the ministry's online storage.

**PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY**

A parent or legal guardian is asked to remain in the room with a child with specific needs until it is decided between the parent or legal guardian and Youth and Family Director that the child and teachers have completed a transitional period. If a parent or legal guardian is not available to remain with the child, an adult who has an established relationship with the child and can lovingly serve and re-direct the child may replace the parent or legal guardian.

Once the child is signed out from the classroom, they are the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardians. Children are not to be in the Children's Garden, sanctuary, upstairs, or any other common area without the supervision of a parent or legal guardian. While staff and volunteers will do everything reasonably possible to ensure adherence to this policy, it remains that the child is in the care, custody, and control of the parent once they are signed out of the classroom.

**EMERGENCIES**

At no time are staff or volunteers to give or apply any medications to children except for bandages for minor cuts/abrasions or ice packs for bumps. If a child needs medication, the parent must administer it. No medications will be left in any classroom with the following exceptions: children who carry inhalers for asthma or medication for serious allergies.

Diagrams noting the locations of fire extinguishers and exit routes are posted in each room. All staff and volunteers should be familiar with the location of the diagram and its contents.

First aid boxes will be kept on hand and all staff and volunteers are to review their locations and contents.

## **SUPERVISION RATIO**

Our goal in the classroom is to provide an environment of acceptance and love in which learning can take place. Room allocation is geared to the needs and size of a particular class/group.

For teaching classes:

There will be a minimum of 1 adult teacher for every class. Whenever there is only one adult leader in a classroom with children, the door will remain open or there will be a window allowing anyone passing to look in without interrupting the teaching process. All doors are to remain unlocked except in the event of an emergency.

## **NURSERY/PRESCHOOL**

Our nursery is staffed with a minimum of one adult and our preschool is staffed with two adults. The doors to the nursery and preschool room are equipped with doors that allow anyone passing by to check-in at any time.

## **RESTROOMS**

Parents are encouraged to take their children to the washroom before the beginning of the service. No child should be sent to the washroom alone. Staff and volunteers will prop the bathroom door to the hall open as to not be alone in the bathroom with a child.

## **SLEEPOVERS**

If a sleepover is to be held for the children or youth, additional adult supervision is required.

Co-ed groups must have adequate adult supervision of both genders. The supervisors should not all be members of the same family. Additional adults may be recruited for the event. A minimum of 2 adult supervisors of each gender is recommended.

## **ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR**

All staff and volunteers must always be above reproach in their words and conduct. They are to behave lovingly, demonstrating the principles of respect, honesty, and trustworthiness.

They must not in any way be involved in any of the following activities with older children: extended hugging, kissing, sitting on a lap, inappropriate touching, or being alone with a child.

If a child approaches an adult leader with the intent to hug or kiss, or unexpectedly does so, the adult leader should accept the affection, but should quickly as possible, in a non-rejecting manner, encourage a more appropriate form of physical contact. Appropriate expressions for ages 0 – 3 include picking up the child, comforting the child, holding the hand of the child, changing diapers. Appropriate physical contact with children ages 4+ could include a handshake, pat on the back, a quick hug of encouragement with hands located in the shoulder area, and a “high five”.

Workers who are not feeling well should not lead a group of children. Notification, if possible, to the YFM Director should happen as soon as possible so that others can step in and assist in the supervision of children. When notification is not possible until the last minute, adjustments should be made in the program to allow for all protective measures to be adhered to.

## **PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM ABUSE**

Unity Spiritual Center Denver has a spiritual, moral, and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for children and youth who participate in church programs. Abuse of children or youth is a criminal act and a violation of human dignity. It is a violation of God’s moral law within the trusted context of a

relationship. It is criminal behavior that causes emotional, physical, and spiritual trauma to victims, and has destructive consequences for abusers. This policy is to take appropriate steps to prevent abuse from occurring.

1. **SCREENING:** We will screen all paid employees, including pastors, and volunteers who work with preschoolers, children, or youth.
2. **BACKGROUND CHECK:** All paid staff and volunteers will undergo a background check. The church will pay any associated fees for the background check.
3. **STAFF TRAINING:** We will train all of our staff who work with preschoolers, children, or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse, and how to carry out policies to prevent sexual abuse including clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents.
4. **POLICY STATEMENT:** We take seriously our policies to prevent sexual abuse and will see that they are enforced.
5. **A VOLUNTEER MINISTRY COVENANT** will be signed by all volunteers agreeing to comply with church policies and guidelines.
6. **ADULT SUPERVISION RULE:** There will be a minimum of 1 adult teacher for every class. Whenever there is only one adult leader in a classroom with children, the door will remain open or there will be a window allowing anyone passing to look in without interrupting the teaching process. All doors are to remain unlocked except in the event of an emergency.
7. **THE SIX MONTH RULE:** Volunteers will be permitted to work with preschoolers, children, or youth only after they have been active members or active adherents of Unity Spiritual Center Denver for a period of six months.
8. **CHECKING REFERENCES:** The YFM Director will check references for volunteers applying for any position involving work with preschoolers, children, or youth.
9. **CHILDREN'S CHURCH DIRECTORY:** A directory of names and addresses of volunteers, parents, and children will be carefully maintained by the Youth Ed Director.

#### WHAT IS ABUSE?

- **Physical Abuse:** This is the use of physical force by the caretaker (parent/guardian, babysitters, or foster parent) of the child, which results in any injury to the child. This injury is sometimes described by health professionals as a non-accidental injury.
- **Physical Neglect:** This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary or essential physical care from the child with resulting injury or damage to the child. Necessary physical care can include food, nutrition, shelter, clothing, medical care, safety, supervision, sensory stimulation (particularly to young infants)
- **Emotional Abuse:** This is the acting out by the parent or caretaker of the child of their negative or ambiguous feelings towards the child, resulting in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of behavior may consist of constant chastising, belittling, verbal tirades, ridicule, humiliation, or the out and out rejection of the child's sense of self-worth and dignity.
- **Emotional Neglect:** This is the chronic or episodic withholding of necessary emotional care and support from the child, which results in some degree of emotional damage to the child. This kind of neglect might consist of withholding affection and love from the child; it might also include the withholding of affirmations of the child's self-worth, trust, and belongingness. In extreme forms, emotional neglect can involve the complete withdrawal of any verbal and/or non-verbal interactions with the child, manifesting the complete rejection of the child.
- **Sexual Abuse:** This is the sexual exploitation of a child by a caretaker or other family member, or any adult, resulting in damage or injury to the child sexually, either psychologically or physically. Forms of sexual exploitation include behavior or sexual nature, touching of a sexual nature, and sexual intercourse.

## **RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT**

We have a public responsibility to report a child in need of protection. Every person who believes or suspects on reasonable grounds that a child needs or may need protection must report promptly the belief and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society.

### **Special responsibility imposed on professionals and officials to report abuse**

A professional or official who in the course of their duties concerning a child has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall report forthwith the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society even if he/she has already reported a previous incident.

### **What constitutes 'abuse' for the purpose of professional reporting?**

- A child suffers 'abuse' in any of the following circumstances:

The child has or is at risk to suffer physical harm and there is a pattern of neglect either inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by the person's failure to adequately

- Care and provide for the child, or
- Supervise and protect the child;
- The child has been or is at risk to likely be sexually molested or sexually exploited by the person having charge of the child, or by another person where the person having charge of the child:
  - Knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation, and
  - Fails to protect the child.
- The child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering, and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child:
  - Does not provide treatment or
  - Refuses to provide treatment
  - Is unavailable to consent to treatment, or
  - Is unable to consent to the treatment
- The child has or is likely to suffer emotional harm or there is a pattern of neglect by the parent or the person having charge of the child, demonstrated through the actions of the child as:
  - Serious anxiety, or
  - Severe depression, or
  - Serious withdrawal, or
  - Serious self-destructive or aggressive behavior, or
  - Seriously delayed development
- And the child's parent or the person having charge of the child:
  - Does not provide services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm,
  - Refuses to provide services or treatment
  - Is unavailable to consent to such services or treatment.
  - Is unable to consent to such services or treatment
- The child has been abandoned, the child's parent has died, or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and the parent refuses or is unable, or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.

- The child is less than 12 years old and has killed or seriously injured another person, or caused serious damage to another's person's property, services and treatments are necessary to prevent a reoccurrence, and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide or refuses, or is unavailable or unable to consent to those services and treatments.
- The child is less than 12 years of age and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of the person having charge of the child, or because of that person's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately.

### **Professional confidentiality**

Should civil action be brought against a person who made a report, he/she will be protected unless he/she acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his/her belief or suspicion.

Reporting abuse: An alleged victim less than eighteen years of age, and alleged perpetrator not acting on behalf of the church.

Any report of abuse by a child to a volunteer teacher, a person on the staff, or another member of the church will be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) The report will be made immediately by the person who was initially proved with the information. If there is doubt as to the validity of the information, the report will still be made to the CDHS. The decision to investigate the report will be made by the CDHS.

When a volunteer teacher, person on staff, or other members of the church has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be suffering from abuse or is at risk to suffer abuse, the person who suspects the abuse will report to the CDHS with the information immediately. The decision to investigate will be made by the CDHS.

### **Reporting abuse:**

An alleged victim less than 18 years of age, and alleged perpetrator acting on behalf of the church (volunteer teacher, a person on the staff, etc.)

A report of abuse within the church will be reported directly to the CDHS immediately by the person who receives the information. IF there is doubt as to the validity of the information, the CDHS will be notified and the decision to investigate will be left there.

When someone in the church suspects that someone who is acting on behalf of the church in a leadership role is behaving abusively towards a child or children, the person with the suspicion will directly report it to the CDHS. The CDHS will make the decision for further investigation.

The individual who receives the information of abuse from a child or alleged victim, or suspects another person of abuse will then also contact either the chairperson of the Board of Directors or a member of the pastoral staff. The person who has been contacted will then arrange a meeting with the rest of the above-mentioned people. If it is appropriate to the situation, the Youth Education Director will also be invited to the meeting. This group will meet to assess whether or not it is appropriate for the alleged perpetrator to continue in his/her role with the church at that time.

Any further discussion with the parties involved will be done under the direction of the investigating body (CDHS).

### **Reporting abuse: Alleged victims eighteen years of age or older.**

The individual who receives the information will encourage the alleged victim to access counseling and protection through the local police and pastoral or counseling services. No one will be informed of the allegations without the consent of the alleged victim. The church will listen to and support the alleged

victim but will not take action outside of the church on his/her behalf; that is, the alleged victim must be the individual to lay charges with the police, but the church will provide physical and emotional support during this time if requested.

If the incident involves an alleged perpetrator acting on behalf of the church (Sunday School teachers, pastors, etc.) the alleged victim will be informed of the church policy to assess the appropriateness of the alleged perpetrators continuing role in his/her role in the church. This assessment will be made at a meeting of the Board of Directors, the Youth and Family Ministry Director, and the pastoral staff. With the knowledge of the alleged victim, one of the above people will be informed to contact the remaining people and coordinate a meeting.

### **Reporting Accidents/Injuries**

Occasionally, during the course of regular program activities, injury occurs. These may be minor or major in nature. After appropriate support and assistance are given to the injured child or leader, a written Incident Investigation Report should be filled out by the program coordinator or appropriate person on the pastoral staff. A description of the incident, contributing factors, and the treatment given should be noted. Witnesses to the incident should be listed with addresses and phone numbers for follow-up purposes.

The Incident Investigation Reports should be reviewed by the Board of Directors. A member of the Board should be appointed to investigate the incident and bring recommendations back to the Board to prevent a recurrence of the accident. These reports are to be kept in the church office for future reference.